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ORIGIN OF NAMES OF KANSAS STREAMS.

By J. R. MEAD, Wichita, Kan.

Read before the Academy, at Iola, December 31, 1901.

THE origin of the names borne by some of our Kansas streams is well known; others are unknown or uncertain. Of a few of them I have personal knowledge.

The "Kaw" or "Kansas" derived its name from the tribe of Indians found living along its banks.

The "Saline" from the character of its water.

The "Smoky Hill" from the prominent isolated buttes within the great bend, landmarks widely known, to be seen from a great distance through an atmosphere frequently hazy from smoke.

The above names were given by plainsmen and explorers prior to the settlement of Kansas, and were probably known by the same names by the Indians, using words expressing the same meaning.

How the "Solomon" obtained its peculiar name is unknown to the writer. We have no account of King Solomon visiting Kansas.

In 1859 the writer, desiring to explore the Saline river, at that time almost unknown, sought information from Col. Wm. A. Phillips, who had recently staked out the town of Salina. He referred me to his brother-in-law, a young man named Spillman, who had been up the river forty miles to a large tributary from the north, miry and difficult to cross on account of salt marshes near its mouth. We arrived at this stream late at night and in the dark drove into a miry bog. I remarked we had found "Spillman's creek" all right, and that name it bears to this day.

Fifteen miles west we found another heavily timbered stream, which we called "Wolf creek," from the great number of wolves we killed there. Other hunters, following us later, adopted the names we had given these streams.

The next winter I was hunting far up the Smoky Hill, but found nothing, the country being burnt over, a silent, desolate waste. Crossing north to the Saline we found the same desert conditions, but from a high bluff looking north I could see in the distance timber in a gulch coming out of the divide, and the tops of the adjoining hills appeared black. We drove in that direction, arriving just at sunset, and found the hills covered with buffalo, elk and deer in the ravines, gangs of wolves trotting around, and droves of turkeys in the groves of oak, elm and cedar along the stream, which was dammed by beaver at short intervals, so that no water escaped to the plain. All together, it was the most beautiful spot I had ever seen. There was no indica-

tion that white men had ever visited the place. I told my men we had found "paradise" at last. The stream and valley became known as "Mead's Paradise"—a hunters' paradise it was. In one day we secured eighty-two wolves and as many buffalo, elk and deer as we wished. In 1860 Gen. Hugh McKee, of Leavenworth, surveyed the Saline river country and adopted, in his report, the names I had given to these streams. Near the site of our camp the town of Paradise now stands.

The "Ninnescah" river is an Osage (Dakota) name, meaning "good spring-water," from the great number of springs coming out of the Tertiary gravels of its upper course.

"Neosho" is also an Osage name, meaning "ne," water, and "osho," clear—Neosho, water clear. In the Indian languages the adjective comes after the noun.

"Smoot's creek," in Kingman county, was named after Col. S. S. Smoot, of Washington, D. C., who surveyed that county in 1865.

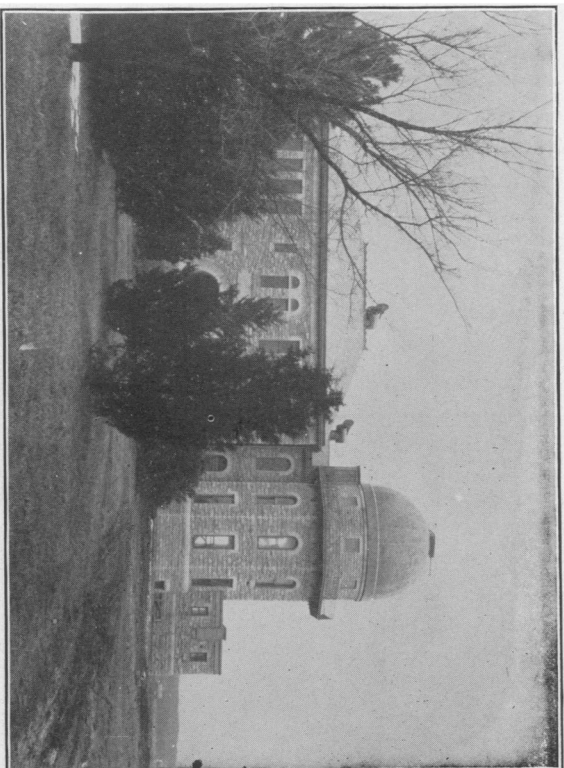
"Chisholm creek," which runs through the east side of Wichita, was named after Jesse Chisholm, a noted Cherokee trader, who built the first cabin on the creek, and occupied it with his family from 1864 to 1867.

"Hell creek," a branch of the Saline, was appropriately named from some experiences of myself and other hunters in buffalo days.

"Medicine Lodge" is of Indian origin. The first explorers found on that stream a great house built of posts, poles, and brush, where from time out of mind the Cheyenne Indians annually assembled to worship the Great Spirit and initiate their young men in their secret rites and ceremonies, thus preserving ancient traditions and customs. White men called this "making medicine"; hence the name, "Medicine Lodge."

"Skeleton creek" was a name we gave to a stream in Oklahoma in 1867. When the Wichita Indians, moving south, died of cholera in great numbers, on the head of that stream close to the present town of Enid, I saw their skeletons lying unburied on the ground a month or two after their death. Prior to that time the stream had no name.

"Round Pond creek," in Oklahoma, was named by us in 1864, from a circular body of water surrounding a beautiful island, which had been in former years a bend of the stream. In time the narrow neck of land was worn through, leaving a lake surrounding an island. In time the Rock Island railroad, following our trail south, crossed Pond creek near this lake, and the towns of Round Pond and Pond Creek were founded. One of these towns survives.



Washburn College Observatory.